



December 29, 2021

Honorable Matt de Ferranti
Chairman, Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Pentagon City Planning Study

Dear Chairman de Ferranti:

Members of the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) have participated actively in the public engagement process for the Pentagon City Planning Study, have submitted comments during the various stages of the study and have received multiple presentations from staff. The FNRC appreciates this opportunity to offer the following comments.

The FNRC commends the staff and consulting team for their responsiveness to public comments throughout the process. The plan responds to many of the recommendations made in the Livability 22202, focusing on accommodating the expected growth in population by designing a welcoming, walkable, livable and nature-filled community. The incorporation of the Green Ribbons is a key element of the plan, by creating a cohesive and connected natural, green infrastructure. While not everyone will be satisfied with all of the specifics in the study, overall the direction of intentionally and systematically incorporating biophilic design and connected natural elements into our built environment is a huge step forward for Arlington.

While more aggressive tree canopy targets are always preferable, the commission supports setting the tree canopy target at a minimum of 20%. Trees provide the basic infrastructure for a healthier, resilient natural ecosystem which helps absorb storm water and supports clean air, clean water and reduces the heat island effect in this densely developed urban environment. Reaching this target will be an important element in providing the myriad benefits that trees provide.

Incorporating the required minimum 10% vegetated areas within individual developments is also a welcome improvement. This concept tracks closely with other jurisdictions that have successfully implemented green area ratios. As we have often heard from developers, they want both certainty and flexibility. By including the minimum 10% vegetated areas, developers have that certainty but are able to creatively design vegetation into specific development projects. Each project will thereby contribute to the larger vision of continuous and connected vegetated green infrastructure within the study area.

This study recognizes the mutually reinforcing design features that either contribute to or detract from the larger whole. By establishing minimum green infrastructure requirements, this study begins to address some of the long-term sustainability issues with which we must contend going forward.

The FNRC applauds the forward-looking planning incorporated into this study and believes that this exemplary plan is, or should be, precedent-setting for all county planning efforts in both biophilic content and in responsiveness to public comments during the engagement process. The commission looks forward to replication of these themes and practices in future planning efforts throughout the county. Thank you for this opportunity to share our views.

Sincerely,



Phil Klingelhofer, Chair
Forestry and Natural Resources Commission

Cc: Members, Arlington County Board
Members, Planning Commission
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Claude Williamson, Director, Community Planning, Housing and Development